

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 14788 071435Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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SUBJECT: CONGRESS (R) IN TAMIL NADU--AFTERMATH OF PRIME
MINISTER'S VISIT

REF: MADRAS 1684

1. SUMMARY: CONGRESS (R) LEADERS IN TAMIL NADU HAVE
CALLED FOR THE ENROLLMENT OF 20 LAKH MEMBERS DURING THE MONTH
OF OCTOBER, BUT PAST PERFORMANCE AND DIVISIONS IN THE PARTY
MAKE THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS GOAL MOST UNLIKELY. IN CONTRAST,
THE DMK SEEMS TO BE MAINTAINING ITS POPULARITY IN THE STATE.
END SUMMARY.

2. HEEDING MRS. GANDHI'S CALL FOR GREATER PARTY ACTIVITY,
ALL BUT ONE OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE TAMIL NADU DISTRICT
CONGRESS (R) COMMITTEES MET IN MADRAS ON SEPTEMBER 25
AND DECIDED TO LAUNCH AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO ENROL AT LEAST
20 LAKH PARTY MEMBERS IN TAMIL NADU DURING THE MONTH OF
OCTOBER. THE MEETING WAS CHAIRED BY TNCC PRESIDENT
KARUPPIAH MOOPANAR WHO REPORTED, BASED ON HIS DISCUSSIONS

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 14788 071435Z

WITH THE DCC PRESIDENTS, THAT THE CONGRESS (R) WAS IN GOOD HEALTH

AND THAT THERE WAS "A REMARKABLE INCREASE" IN MEMBERSHIP. MOST LOCAL LEVEL TALUK, BLOCKS, AND TOWN COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED, HE SAID, AND THE REST WOULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN A WEEK TO TEN DAYS. DURING THE OCTOBER RECRUITING DRIVE, THE TNCC PLANS TO DISPATCH TEAMS OF SPEAKERS TO THE DISTRICTS TO STEP UP PARTY PROPAGANDA. CAPPING OFF THESE EFFORTS WOULD BE THE CONVENING OF THE PRADESH CONGRESS COMMITTEE SOMETIME IN OCTOBER WITH THE DATE AND PLACE TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER.

3. COMMENT:

(A) IT APPEARS THAT THIS MEETING OF THE DCC PRESIDENTS IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE PREDILECTION OF THE CONGRESS (R) IN TAMIL NADU TOWARDS "MORE TALK--LESS WORK". ASIDE FROM SOME WELL-PUBLICISED CONFABS COMMEMORATING GANDHI'S BIRTHDAY AND KAMARAJ'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY, PARTY ACTIVITY HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY NEGLIGIBLE IN RECENT DAYS, AND THE PRESENCE OF GOI MINISTERS REDDI, SHUKIA, AND PAI IN TAMIL NADU LAST WEEK HAS NOT ELICITED MUCH INTEREST. THE PARTY APPEARS TO BE MORIBUND, MERE CALLS TO ENROL TWO MILLIO MEMBERS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO BRING RESULTS, AND THE GAP BETWEEN PROJECTION AND REALITY AT THE END OF OCTOBER WILL MOST PROBABLY BE EMBARRASSINGLY WIDE.

(B) FAR FROM BEING IN A POSITION TO BUILD UP ITS BASE, THE TNCC (R) MAY EVEN BE LOSING GROUND. CNGEN PERSONNEL VISITING MADURAI AND NORTH ARCOT DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU WERE STRUCK BY THE PREPONDERANCE OF DMK AND AADMK PARTY FLAGS IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES. MOST OF THE DMK FLAGS SEEMED TO BE NEW, INDICATING THAT MONEY IS STILL FLOWING INTO THE PARTY COFFERS FOR REGULAR EXPENSES, IN ADDITION TO THE THOUSANDS OF RUPEES BEING CONTRIBUTED TO THE DMK LAWYER'S FUND. MADURAI STILL CONTINUE TO BE STRONGLY DMK, DESPITE THE CONGRESS (R) BLITZ THAT PREPARED THE CITY FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT ON SEPTEMBER 14-15. DURING THIS PAST WEEKEND, DMK PRESIDENT M. KARUNANIDHI VISITED MADURAI AND WAS SO WARMLY WELCOMED THAT EVEN THE PRECENSORED INDIAN EXPRESS HAD TO REPORT THAT "A LARGE GATHERING OF DMK LEADERS AND MEMBERS GREETED MR. M. KARUNANIDHI, PARTY PRESIDENT, ON HIS ARRIVAL..." FROM TALKING WITH A LOWER-LEVEL INDIVIDUALS IN MADURAI, ONE OF THE CONGEN EMPLOYEES

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 14788 071435Z

HAS GAINED THE DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT THE COMMOM PEOPLE (AT LEAST IN MADURAI) ARE QUITE BORED BY THE SARKARIA COMMISSION AND THE ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION, SAYING THAT THIS CORRUPTION IS NO WORSE THAN CORRUPTION EVERYWHERE ELSE AND THAT AT LEAST THE DMK HELPED THE POOR PEOPLE. NOW THAT SARKARIA COMMISSION IS HOLDING HEARINGS AWAY FROM TAMIL NADU, INTEREST SHOULD DECREASE EVEN MORE, ALGHOUGH THE PAPERS ARE GIVING THE HEARINGS THE SAME TYPE OF EXHAUSTIVE

COVERAGE AS BEFORE.

(C) TNCC(R) PARTYMEN MAY DESCRIBE HOW ENTHUSED THEY ARE AS A RESULT OF MRS. GANDHI'S SEPTEMBER VISIT, BUT THIS ENTHUSIASM HAS NOT AND PROBABLY WILL NOT TRICKLE DOWN TO THE MASS OF VOTERS OF THIS STATE. IT IS QUITE AN ADMISSION TO STATE, NEARLY EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE MUCH BALLYHOOED MERGER OF THE CONGRESS (R) AND CONGRESS (O) ON FEBRUARY 15, THAT SOME LOCAL COMMITTEES HAVE YET TO BE ESTABLISHED. AS FOR THE VAUNTED MERGER, ONLY A FEW AMBITIOUS, ASPIRING CONGRESS (O) POLITICIANS CAME OVER TO THE CONGRESS (R) SIDE, WITH THE END RESULT THAT FACITIONALISM AND BICKERING HAVE INCREASED PROPORTIONATELY. EVEN WITH THE ENORMOUS ADVANTAGES AFFORDED BY THE EMERGENCY AND PRESIDENT'S RULE, THE TNCC(R) HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAKE HEADWAY, AND IT MAY BE THAT A PROLONGATION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE WILL EVENTUALLY WORK AGAINST THE CONGRESS (R). GIVEN THESE PROSPECTS, IT IS PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLE WHY PARTY LEADERS DO LITTLE MORE THAN TALK.

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